

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 17, 2017, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Farra (Vice Chair), Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Gary Kilpatrick, Sherman Smith

Nonmembers: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison),

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Review and approval of December minutes

With the fix of a misspelling and the suggested attachment of an email note from Linda McElroy in response to the draft of a Trail Through Time section, approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Trail Through Time (TTT) update

Joe H walked the trails with Linda McElroy and checked the blazing of the green (dedicated TTT) trails. He notes that there is another trail yet to go onto our maps. It has end markers but is not yet blazed. Joe marked trees with green ribbons to suggest possible blazing that will be done by LSC blazing volunteers, most likely in the Spring.

Any interest in attending an education event, “What is a Land Trust?” which would include information about the Conservation Restriction (CR) land-protection tool?

Susan Mitchell-Hardt had sent an email:

... the presentation on “What is a Land Trust?” has been tweaked to focus on “How to Monitor Conservation Restrictions” using an ACT-held CR as a model. It’s intended to be coupled with field training in early spring. I’ll keep [the LSC] informed as soon as the plan is firmed up.

Several expressed interest in attending. Stewards for parcels with CRs should try to attend. Why do some of our parcels not have CRs? CRs are expensive and require manpower. Also, our parcels are protected pretty well because they belong to the town. A discussion ensued on reasons for CRs.

National Trails Day, 06/03/17 (Agenda item thru May).

– Ideas for Cub Scout Pack 32 (Buster O’Brien)?

This Pack does a project for each National Trails Day. If you have any ideas for your parcel between now and June, let the Committee know.

Maps — Jim S-G, Joe H

Nothing new.

Conservation Land (CL): Naming Guidelines, a proposal

Joe H compiled and shared proposed “Acton Conservation Land Naming Guidelines”. Points made during the ensuing discussion:

- This is not for changing current names. This would be for future naming or for changing preliminary names. For example the guidelines suggest that the recently acquired 176 Central Street land would be Muddy Brook CL.
- Insert as Guideline 0 (i.e., at the top of the list of guidelines): Has the land been donated to the Town accompanied by a naming request by the donor, i.e., has a name been legally mandated? Perhaps this could come under “historical recognition.”
- Wording in Guideline 2 could be “If it is adjacent, or nearly adjacent, to an existing . . .”
- Citing Stoneymeade CL as being named for a developer is likely incorrect as it likely was named for the Stoneymeade Farm on Pope Road.
- As for signage, if we need to replace non-conforming signs, make them match the guidelines, but while signs are still in good shape, leave them be.
- Some CLs have non-contiguous pieces (e.g., Grassy Pond). Who looks after those pieces? Bettina: At present we wait for abutters to raise concerns.
- Great Hill is a unique parcel. The Hill itself is recreation land, purchased with a Federal recreation grant. Bob G has an original map showing original planning for Great Hill.
- For the purpose of fit, Bruce omits “Conservation Land” from CL names on website menus.

Joe will revise the guidelines considering the edits suggested at this meeting and present a more final form of the guidelines to the LSC next month.

The LSC thanks Joe for compiling the proposed guidelines.

176 Central Street/Mt. Hope/Heath Hen Meadow (signs on Cemetery land, poster shelters, map boxes, kiosks)

Paula is lead person on this. She could not make this meeting so the LSC will table this until next month. Perhaps Paula could simply present the LSC with a map showing everything (in the list above).

Other parcel information

- Great Hill: Dog owners are abusing the privilege of trail access that Mill Corner has granted on its property and Mill Corner is at the point where it is going to close the trail to the public. The trail connects Little Great Hill playing field with the red trail into Great Hill from the Discovery Museums. “Mill Corner and Dogs” will be on the February agenda.
- Bulette: Joe H walked the Bulette trails with Andy Gatesman. He noted that people pull off Route 2 and go into this CL to hunt. Should the LSC do something about this, e.g., boulders to block vehicle access? Probably not, as doing so would also block access to the gas transmission line that runs through the parcel. Also, the site in question is State land (along Route 2, a State highway) and making an issue of this could open a can of worms as the Town has never asked the State for permission to put a trail or a bridge on State land. The State/Town land border is an old farmyard type fence, some remnants of which are still visible.
- North Acton parcels: The parcels are plastered with “You are here” maps mounted under plastic (where plastic has survived). The maps, generally, are in terrible shape. It would be better to just have laminated maps attached to plywood. Great Hill also has poster shelters with plastic under which paper maps are to be mounted, but are often missing. Bob G pointed out that a small parcel in Chelmsford has four miles of trails. Every trail junction is numbered to match numbers shown on the map of the parcel (see <http://ma-chelmsford.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/268>). To do this, there would be the cost of metal numbers. Also, people would have to have access to the map showing the numbers.
- Nashoba Brook: Laurie decided to not remove the wooden crossing of the Robbins Mill sluiceway. Bob G will see that the bridge is built there in the Spring. Bob has already given Bettina the lumber list.

Laurie also mentioned that Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is planning a "Thoreau Trail" from Walden Pond to Mount Wachusett in conjunction with the Thoreau Bicentennial celebration. Laurie would live right on the trail, meaning the trail would use part of the Nashoba Brook trails. See <http://freedomsway.org/programs/thoreau/the-thoreau-trail/>

LSC Website

a. Brainstorming WildAware stories

Paula was absent.

b. Workdate calendar

John couldn't find the (website) calendar today.

Joe H had scheduled a workdate when the ground was soft. He got one volunteer who then cancelled at the last minute. Joe spent 2 h himself pulling garlic mustard.

Bruce had to move the website to a new server — It's on Bruce's "virtual private" server at no cost to the Town, one way for Bruce to "give back" to the Town. He spent last week making this move, and gave details. The site was down for a couple hours. There are also a few configuration issues. The calendar is still there but the calendar items have disappeared. Website discussion ensued. A couple questions/observations:

Why are there two listings of Conservation Land on the site? Mainly to make the site friendly no matter how it is accessed.

The site has lost its "related links" to get to other towns' websites.

February agenda

Bruce will not be here and is wondering who will be. Just about everyone, so Bob F will chair the meeting. Mill Corner and Dogs will be on the agenda. Jim should have a map update by then. Joe H hopes to propose a trail on "greater Bulette" (Bulette and the Anderson property). Joe will also present updated guidelines for naming CLs.

Evaluate meeting

Nice short meeting, but very chaotic.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 21, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.